



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Refuge Happenings

November 2023: *The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge is located in ten locations on the mainland and near shore islands along the northern shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut.*

Engineer Design for the North Branch Bridge



The North Branch Bridge at the Nulhegan Basin Division, Vermont is one of two critical access points onto the refuge. The underrated bridge is showing signs of deterioration and is proposed for replacement in 2024. MJ Engineering has been contracted to design the replacement bridge for the site. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoor Act.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Photo Credit: USFWS

McKinney Refuge Becomes An Outdoor Lab For Students



Ashley Williams, one of our summer technicians at S.B. McKinney NWR's Outer and Falkner Islands, recently helped to lead an ecology class day at Great Meadows in Stratford, CT. Ashley is still working for the refuge part time this fall, and is taking classes toward her degree at the University of Bridgeport. As part of the program, college students tested water quality in the marsh, and searched for wildlife such as fish and crustaceans. Thanks to Ashley for taking the initiative to work with these students.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo credit: USFWS

Great Gull Island Clean Up



This fall, McKinney refuge staff helped the American Museum of Natural History with the management of Great Gull Island in eastern Long Island Sound. The Island was transferred to the Museum from the U.S. Army for tern conservation. Great Gull has one of the largest common tern colonies in the world, and one of the largest roseate tern colonies in the western hemisphere. Refuge staff helped the Museum remove large amounts of debris which had accumulated over decades. This effort resulted in improved habitat for the terns, and better living accommodations for the seasonal survey team that lives on the island during the summer.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Photo: USFWS



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Scouting Adventures At McKinney Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

A Connecticut Boy Scout troop and their families joined Ranger Shaun at the McKinney NWR for a two-hour program at the Salt Meadow Division in late October. Participants learned about endangered species, the importance of national wildlife refuges, local at-risk species and how to find signs of wildlife on a hike. Upon completing the program, the Scouts fulfilled the requirements of the "Fur, Feathers, and Ferns Adventure".

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Growing Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnerships



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Visitor Service Staff are working with a new school in Springfield, MA, as part of our Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership. In November, we spent a day at the Martin Luther King Charter School, teaching third grade students about animal anatomy and adaptations for survival. The students worked in teams, examining a variety of animal skulls to identify the kind of animal, as well as what that animal might eat. We look forward to working more closely with other students in the school later this year.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Marine Corps Members Volunteer



Photo Credit: USFWS

Members from the United States Marine Corps, stationed at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee, MA volunteered their time at the Fort River Division this month. The active Marines assisted with maintenance projects at the Refuge, including removing debris piles left from replacing old boardwalks. We appreciate the time these Military Service members have donated to the Refuge.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Engineer Design for the Yellow Branch Culvert



Photo Credit: Gabe Bolin

The Yellow Branch of the Nulhegan River passes under the Eagles Nest Road through a 6 foot steel 'culvert'. The existing culvert appears to have previously been a steel tank that was converted into a culvert. The structure is ranked as a priority replacement, as it is undersized for the location (less than bank full width) and it doesn't allow for adequate aquatic organism passage. The refuge is working with the Connecticut River Conservancy to design a replacement structure for the site. The culvert will be replaced in 2024. The project is being funded by the Inflation Reduction Act.

For more information contact: Jeremy_Goetz@fws.gov

Stay Tuned....World Migratory Bird Day May 2024



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Pondicherry Division will be hosting its 23rd annual Migratory Day Bird Walks for May 11 and 12, 2024. Plans are already in motion to coordinate another successful gathering of bird and nature enthusiasts in New Hampshire. This coming year's theme for World Migratory Bird Day is "insects and their importance to migratory birds". Events are scheduled throughout the Connecticut River watershed, to be on the look out for one near you.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Saturday Work Crew In Connecticut



Photo: USFWS/Izzy Martinez

The McKinney refuge had the pleasure of running a Saturday work crew this fall. Scheduling the work on weekends allowed full-time students and young adults who work other jobs during the week to continue gaining experiences in natural resource conservation, and assist the refuge with labor-intensive project. So far, the crew has replaced a roof on a storage building, placed new wayside exhibits around the refuge, removed debris from refuge islands and assisted in trail improvements. The refuge manager worked alongside the crew to provide guidance and help on the projects.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov